



# Biting Midge

*Biting midges are attracted to human habitation and rest on screens, fences and vegetation. In the Bundaberg Region, they are particularly active during the warmer months, September through to April each year, especially at dawn and dusk.*

## What are biting midges?

Biting midges (often referred to as 'sandflies') are well known because of the severe reaction some people have to their bites. They are very small (1.00mm – 3.00mm) flies. A bite is made in the skin and saliva is injected to prevent blood clotting, thereby allowing blood to be sucked up. The saliva can produce a classic allergic response. Biting midges are most active under calm conditions and will seek shelter amongst vegetation and are less likely to seek a blood meal when it is windy. Biting tends to occur around dawn and dusk, but may continue through the night and during overcast days.

## What are the health impacts?

There are no known diseases of humans transmitted by biting midge in Australia. However, their bites can be painful and/or cause irritation to some people. Secondary infections resulting from scratching of the bites may require the application of antiseptic cream or systemic antibiotics.

## How to control biting midge?

Biting midges are one of the most difficult groups of insects to control. In Australia, there are currently no chemicals that are registered for controlling biting midge in their breeding sites. "Fogging" with an adulticide can provide temporary relief, as it will knock down insects that are in the area whilst the droplets from the fog are airborne. Once the droplets settle the insects can reinfest the area. Residual surface sprays (Barrier Treatments) can be applied to external surfaces and these can knock down all the insects that land on the surface, in some cases for up to 6 weeks. Unfortunately, both of these methods are not midge specific and will kill any insect that comes in contact with the insecticide whilst it is viable. Hence, Council has limited treatment options for biting midge in our region. An extensive research and surveillance program would be required to fully understand this tiny insect. The data from research is necessary to determine what other steps, if any, which Bundaberg Regional Council would need to undertake to decrease the number of nuisance biters in our region.

## How to avoid being bitten?

Wear long, loose-fitting, light-coloured clothing and use insect repellents to provide protection when biting midges are present. As with all chemicals, repellents should be applied in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. Ceiling fans or other air circulation devices that increase air flow inside a dwelling may decrease biting midge nuisance indoors.

When outdoors, the use of mosquito coils, or small lanterns with an impregnated pad (which has the same ingredient as mosquito coils), can be effective. Barrier treatment, using a residual pesticide, around your house and yard can also be utilised. It is recommended that a Licensed Pest Control Operator be engaged if you intend to use the barrier treatment around your property, however you are able to purchase the product 'bifenthrin' from certain retail outlets. If you apply the product yourself use extreme care and follow the manufacturer's instructions.

**Please contact Bundaberg Regional Council – Environmental Health Services on 1300 883 699 should you require any further information.**

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